



Lolo National Forest

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News Release

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Forest Service seeks comments on the North Fork Blackfoot River Native Fish Restoration Project

SEELEY LAKE, Mont. – The Lolo National Forest is seeking comments on the North Fork Blackfoot River Native Fish Restoration Project which is located in the Scapegoat Wilderness on the Seeley Lake Ranger District on the Lolo National Forest, and the Lincoln Ranger District on the Helena – Lewis and Clark National Forest, in Powell and Lewis and Clark counties.

The project would authorize Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to implement fish management and stocking actions within the wilderness that would establish a secure population of native trout, replacing an existing hybrid population. As a species of concern in Montana, the Westslope cutthroat trout is native to the Blackfoot River watershed, but populations have decreased in abundance and distribution across their historical range. Threats to Westslope cutthroat trout include hybridization with rainbow trout, barriers to movement, habitat degradation, and climate change. Due to these pressures, both the Forest Service and FWP have an interest in conserving the species where feasible and consistent with other management interests.

To restore and secure this population, the project proposes the following actions; application of a piscicide, rotenone, to eradicate the non-native fish species; use of motorized equipment such as a boat motor, generator, and a helicopter to transport equipment, supplies, and fish for stocking; temporary development of structures or installations; and use of chemicals (pesticides or herbicides). Additionally, public access in the area would be closed for 7-10 days during the late summer of 2021 to reduce user conflicts with management actions.

The Forest Service has assessed the suitability of the proposed activities in the Scapegoat Wilderness through a process called a “minimum requirements analysis.” This is a process used to identify, analyze, and recommend management actions that are the minimum necessary for wilderness administration, as directed by the Wilderness Act of 1964.

FWP has the responsibility and authority to manage fish and wildlife populations on National Forest System lands in Montana and has completed a Montana Environmental Policy Act Environmental Assessment and Decision Notice for this project which is available for review at: <https://fwp.mt.gov/public-notice/news/2020/nov/north-fork-wct-11092020>.

Opportunity to Comment: Comments on this project will be accepted through **Wednesday, Feb. 10**. Please send comments to: John Slown, Environmental Coordinator, 4289 Cappy Court, Missoula, MT 59804. Electronic comments may be sent to: [comments-northern-lolo-seeley](https://www.fs.usda.gov/forestmanagement/onlinecomments/northern-lolo-seeley).

lake@fs.fed.us. Acceptable formats for electronic comments include word perfect, rtf, or MS word. Office hours, for those who wish to hand deliver comments to the Seeley Lake Ranger District, are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday. For more information, please contact the Seeley Lake Ranger Station, at (406) 677-2233 or visit the Lolo National Forest website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/lolo/landmanagement/projects>.

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